Differences in Social Reactions by Gender of Victim & Recipient
Conceptions in Sexual Assault from a Disclosure Recipient’s View
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INTRODUCTION

- Female survivors of sexual assault (SA) are more likely to endure victim-blaming; individuals that endorse rape myths are more likely than those that do not hold such beliefs to victim blame, regardless of victim gender (Ayala, Kotary, & Hetz, 2018).
- While males are less likely than females to report sexual assault, research concerning male sexual victimization is also lacking (Ayala, Kotary, & Hetz, 2018).
- Male SA victims may face more barriers to disclosure than women largely because they are less likely to disclose than women ➔ less resources for male survivors (Allen, Ridgeway, & Swan, 2015; Walsh et al., 2010).

METHOD

Participants

N = 1,268 undergraduate students from a medium-sized northeastern university. Ages ranged from 18 to 24 years, with a mean of 19.6 (SD: 1.2)
- Participants included 30.9% male; M age = 21.5 (SD = 2.04)
- 91.2% Caucasian, 4.5% Asian, 1.4% African American, 0.2% Native American/Pacific Islander, 2.6% Multiracial/Other
- 88.6% Heterosexual/Straight, 6.4% Bisexual, 1.4% Unsure, 1.3% Gay, 1.1% Pansexual, 0.7% Lesbian, 0.6% Asexual, and 0.4% Other

Procedures

- Participants completed a baseline survey and then were randomly assigned to treatment or control groups. The treatment group was given a Supporting Survivors and Self (SSS) intervention on how to react to disclosures of sexual violence. Follow-up was completed 6 months after initial baseline survey ➔ Data prior to intervention was utilized

Measures

- Social Reactions Questionnaire-Shortened (Relyea & Ullman, 2015): participants are asked about how they have or would respond to a disclosure on a scale from 1 = Never/Extremely unlikely to 5 = Always/Extremely likely. E.g. item: “Told them that they were irresponsible or not cautious enough”
- Intermediary Outcomes: items were created for the study asking about how they felt about their effectiveness in dealing with the disclosure study on a scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. E.g. item: “Victims of intimate partner abuse and sexual assault are at least partly responsible for what happened to them,” or “I feel confident that I could help a friend who has been a victim of intimate partner abuse and/or sexual assault.”

ANALYSIS PLAN

- An analysis of variance models were run to look at differences in the outcomes as a function of the four categories. Follow up tests examined pairwise comparisons where we compared each group to every other group.

RESULTS

Table 1
ANOVA and estimated marginal means for each outcome by group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Omnibus ANOVA F</th>
<th>M-M</th>
<th>F-M</th>
<th>M-F</th>
<th>F-F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative SR</td>
<td>11.17***</td>
<td>1.54a</td>
<td>1.35a</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.28b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive SR</td>
<td>16.09***</td>
<td>3.49abc</td>
<td>3.72ad</td>
<td>3.81b</td>
<td>4.04cd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim</td>
<td>10.16***</td>
<td>2.13bcd</td>
<td>1.71b</td>
<td>1.66c</td>
<td>1.65d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>2.81*</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.61ab</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.35b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffectiveness</td>
<td>3.60*</td>
<td>2.22a</td>
<td>2.67bc</td>
<td>1.96b</td>
<td>2.06ac</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05 ***p < .001. Means that share a subscript are significantly different from each other. Empathy was not significant.

DISCUSSION

- Both hypotheses were supported: Male survivors disclosing SA were more likely to face negative social reactions, especially when disclosing to males. Female disclosures faced the least negative social reactions with disclosing to a female being the most positive.
- The RMA perpetuates that only women can be victims and men are always the perpetrators. More sympathy might have been offered to women because of the prevalence of rape myths
- Limitation: overwhelming majority of the participants were White, female, & heterosexual ➔ not particularly generalizable
- Future Direction: interventions for men that endorse RMA as well as victims of SA could help better negative social reactions to disclosures and combat self-blaming behavior in male survivors.
- Future studies should explore the prevalence of male sexual victimization ➔ researchers should aim to reject the notion of SA being a “woman’s issue.”
- Research such as this current study may help encourage the implementation of sexual assault awareness and response programs in universities.

REFERENCES